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### Low cost computer maker to work with software community

G. Ananthkrishnan

*Distribution of the three computer models is expected to begin in about four months*



**HIGH EXPECTATIONS: One of the three recently launched Mobilis low cost computer models**

CHENNAI: Encore Software Limited of Bangalore, which recently unveiled a set of low cost computers, will work with the independent software community to develop open source applications for professionals and various industry segments.

The ambitious project to produce a basic 10,000-rupee computer and two costlier variants is sponsored by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

The battery powered Mobilis "mobile desktops" to be manufactured by Encore have raised expectations that the computers can be widely used by individuals and also introduced at low budgets in several areas, including e-governance and telemedicine.

The distribution of the three computer models is expected to begin in about four months. At present, the PCs are expected to be priced between Rs. 10,000 and Rs. 20,000 but firm pricing is yet to be worked out.

Unlike computers that follow the conventional PC design,

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expansion of functionality in the Mobilis range requires the use of external USB peripherals. Shashank Garg, Vice-President, Advanced Devices, Encore Software, said it was possible to add an external USB hard disk but it would require its own power supply, as the Mobilis would not be able to provide adequate power for a hard disk or CD-Rom.

Standard PC software (such as Photoshop) would not run on the Mobilis because it was not a traditional PC based on the Intel-Microsoft X86/Windows-PC architecture. "It uses a CPU which is more ideally suited to embedded applications where power conservation is more important than high performance computing. The instruction-set of this CPU is not based on the Pentium series. Hence PC software will not run on this device. However, in a strictly functional sense, we and other solution providers will provide equivalent software that will allow users to browse the Internet, download and play music and save photos," Mr. Garg said in response to emailed questions.

Encore plans to offer support in the future for such tasks as burning CDs using an external USB based writer. At present, the Mobilis can play several common formats of music and video. Support for all formats would be put up on the company's web site.

The three variants planned in the range are: Mobilis-STN, Mobilis-TFT and Mobilis-SofComp. Explaining the display specifications, Mr. Garg said Mobilis-STN was designed with a 7.5 inch LCD display of 640x480 resolution and capability to display up to 256 colours. Mobilis-TFT would have a seven-inch TFT LCD display of 800x480 resolution and capability to display up to 64K colours. Mobilis-SofComp was a desktop device with no built-in display. Instead, it would use an external VGA monitor of 640x480 resolution and 64K colours.

The computers would be equipped with pre-installed software for word-processing and spreadsheets, along with a presentation-viewer, email, and web browser. The new entrants to the PC scene are being promoted as devices that combine the mobility of a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA), the convenience of a laptop's bigger display screen and the connectivity of a desktop.

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